

# Enhanced Security Measures Undertaken in Minneapolis in Preparation for Derek Chauvin Trial; Risk of Protests Nationwide to Persist Through April



**Authors:** Josh Strongin, *Lead Intelligence Analyst – North America*  
Samson Sampson, *Lead Regional Analyst – Global Insights Team*

**Contact:** [Josh.Strongin@everbridge.com](mailto:Josh.Strongin@everbridge.com)

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Security measures are being put in place in anticipation of the trial of former Minneapolis Police Department officer Derek Chauvin, who was involved in the killing of George Floyd last May. The trial will begin with jury selection on Monday, March 8, while the testimony is scheduled to begin a few weeks later on Monday, March 29. A security perimeter has been established around the Hennepin County Government Center in downtown Minneapolis, including several localized road closures. The City of Minneapolis has announced upwards of 1,100 law enforcement officers from local and state agencies are on standby. Moreover, the Minnesota National Guard has been authorized to respond if needed. Protests have been planned in the Minneapolis-St Paul area, and solidarity demonstrations have been planned in other cities around the United States. With local authorities identifying the start of closing arguments—expected in mid-April—as a potential flashpoint, the threat of unrest is likely to build over the coming weeks. There is an elevated risk of collateral damage, along with disruptions to transportation networks, business operations, and infrastructure, in conjunction with any protests or restive behavior that materializes. Unruly demonstrators could target retail establishments, government facilities, and other locations as they did last year.

## KEY JUDGEMENTS

- Protests should be expected in Minneapolis and elsewhere in the US throughout the duration of the trial, notably around the start of closing arguments in mid-April; however, the fervor and potential escalation of any forthcoming unrest will likely be determined by the outcome of the trial.
  - Heightened tensions between protesters and law enforcement and/or counter-protesters, coupled with perceived aggression or inciting tactics by either side, could lead to rapid escalation.

- Similar to the protests that occurred in the summer, there is a risk of outside agitators associated with far-right and far-left groups attempting to infiltrate or co-opt demonstrations to incite escalation and/or attack or clash with activists.
- Law enforcement is likely to react quickly to prevent protest activity from devolving into rioting or looting. Along with the use of dispersal tactics, this may also include the imposition of citywide curfews and/or alterations to public transportation services.
- Retail establishments and infrastructure near protest sites may face threats such as collateral damage, targeted protests or attacks, opportunistic looting, and disruptions or restrictions due to security measures for the duration of the trial.
  - Whereas close proximity to police stations and other government facilities was once considered safe, commercial and residential buildings situated in such areas are subject to a greater threat of spillover unrest due to security perimeters and their location relative to protest flashpoints.
- The City of Minneapolis currently recommends for businesses in the Minneapolis-St Paul area to remain open as normal.
  - The RIMC advises businesses in the area to create contingency plans in the event of additional security measures and/or escalation of protest activities. The announcement of new measures such as localized road closures, public transportation suspensions, or curfews could be made with short notice.

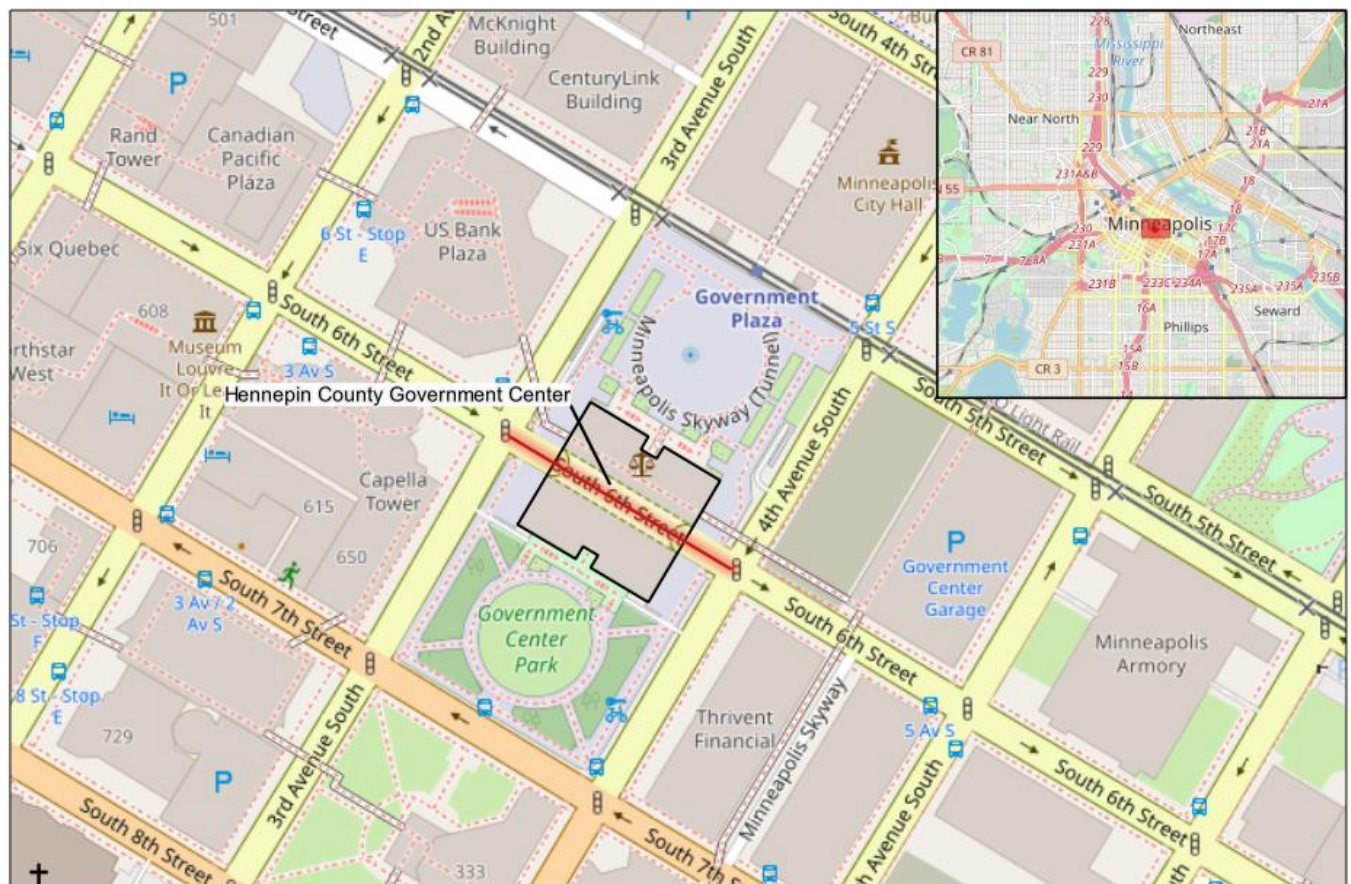
## BACKGROUND

Protests in response to the killing of George Floyd began on May 26 and were initially peaceful until a small group of demonstrators clashed with police outside of the Minneapolis Third Police Precinct headquarters in the Powderhorn neighborhood, southeast of the city center. The majority of disruptions and damage in the Twin Cities area occurred during a three-day period that began on May 27 and entailed widespread rioting and looting throughout the Minneapolis-St Paul area. Approximately 1,300 properties in Minneapolis suffered damage, including at least 100 that were completely destroyed, costing an estimated US \$350 million. Businesses along E Lake St, near the Third Precinct, reported some of the worst damage from the riots, including an Autozone store across the street from the precinct that was set on fire, a nearby Target store that was extensively looted, and an under-construction housing development known as Midtown Corner, which was destroyed after being torched. The majority of riot-related destruction in Minneapolis occurred along a five-mile stretch of Lake St in the southern part of the city, including the aforementioned Third Precinct. In neighboring St Paul, an additional 330 buildings suffered damage, including at least 37 that required significant repairs or were completely destroyed. The majority of the St Paul rioting and looting occurred along the University Avenue businesses corridor and cost an estimated US \$82 million. The unrest led to the deployment of over 7,000 Minnesota National Guard troops across the Twin Cities. Over 600 arrests were made and at least two deaths and dozens of injuries were reported.

Overall, demonstrations were reported in more than 2,440 locations in Minneapolis and some 150 other cities in all 50 states. Although the majority of the gatherings appeared peaceful, between four and seven percent turned violent, with some escalating into rioting, looting, and clashes between participants and police. In a bid to restore calm, the National Guard was activated in at least 21 states, while local authorities imposed nightly curfews and mobilized additional law enforcement personnel.

The unrest resulted in dozens of casualties, as well as between US \$1 and \$2 billion in damages to thousands of businesses and properties that were ransacked, set alight, or otherwise vandalized. The initial looting and damage to retail establishments led a number of businesses to preemptively close stores throughout the country. This included Target, which temporarily closed 175 stores nationwide, including 71 stores in the state of Minnesota. In total, the unrest ranked as the costliest of its kind in US history and was intermittently exacerbated by flare-ups such as in August following an officer-involved shooting in Kenosha, WI.

### Street Closure For Derek Chauvin Trial



Source: Open Street Map

0 250 500 ft

Source: City of Minneapolis



## TRIAL AND SECURITY DETAILS

Derek Chauvin, one of four officers involved in the George Floyd incident, has been charged with second-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter for allegedly killing George Floyd. The trial is slated to begin on Monday, March 8, with jury selection, and will take place at the Hennepin County Government Center. Jury selection is expected to take around three weeks and will be followed by testimony from the prosecution and defense starting on Monday, March 29. The trial will take upwards of six weeks including jury deliberations, and a verdict is not expected until mid-April at the earliest.

Due to heightened tensions, the unrest seen in May 2020, and significant publicity the trial has garnered, the City of Minneapolis has announced plans for enhanced security measures, known as “Operation Safety Net” (OSN), during the proceedings. A significant security perimeter has been established around the government center, which contains the courthouse, City Hall, and the Hennepin County Jail. The security perimeter includes three rings of concrete barriers, including two topped with fencing and the innermost fence topped with barbed wire. In addition, the ground floors of all three buildings have had their windows boarded. As of March 1, Sixth St S has been closed, including to pedestrian access, between 3rd Ave and 4th Ave. In addition, the site of the George Floyd incident, at 38<sup>th</sup> St and Chicago Ave, will remain closed to vehicular traffic through the end of the trial. In addition to Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) officers, upwards of 1,100 law enforcement officers from 12 different state and local agencies, as well as 2,000 Minnesota National Guard troops, will be available to assist with security as needed. As of this writing, there are no plans for disruptions to Metro Transit service.

## PROTESTS

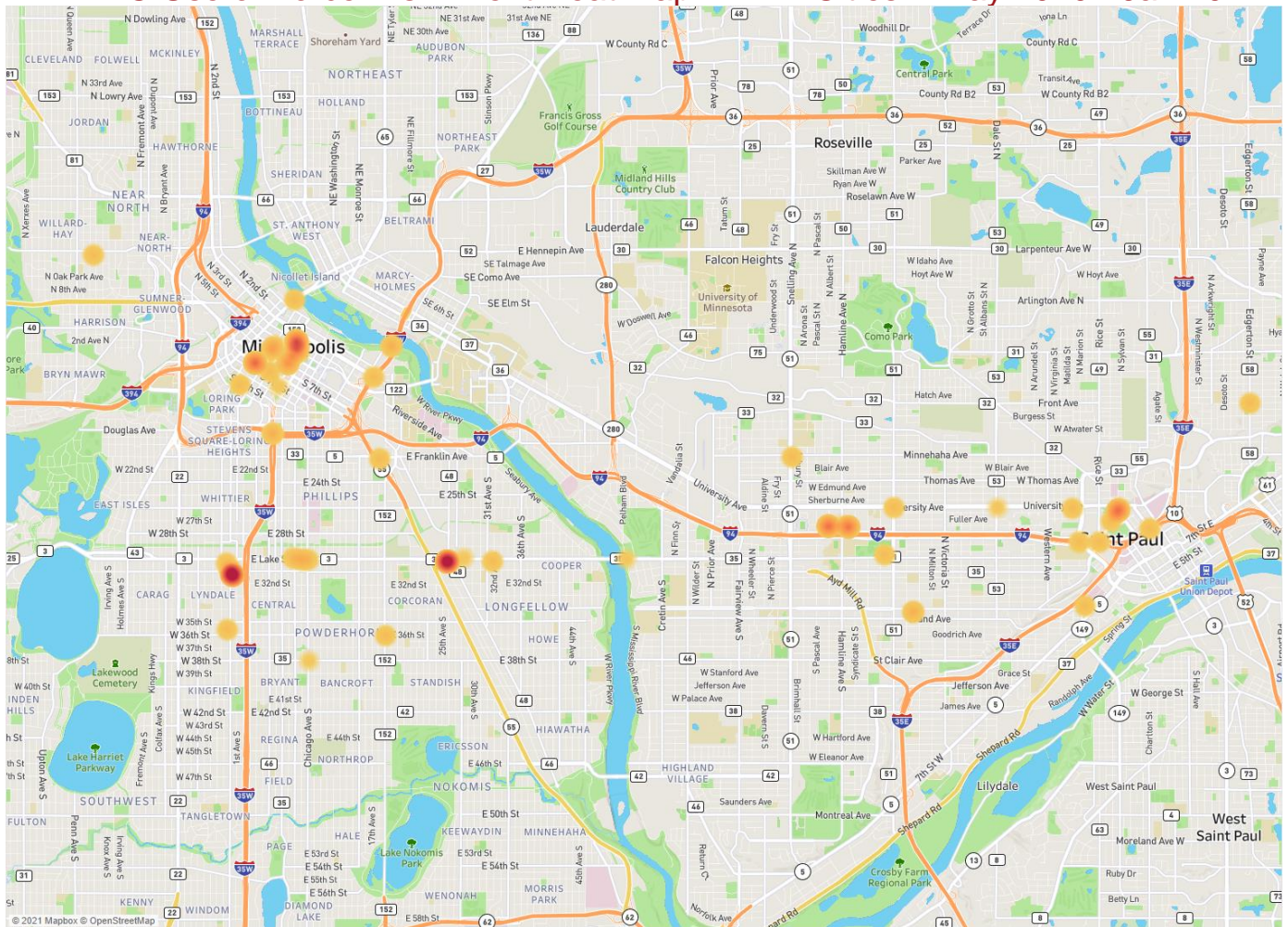
Protests are expected throughout the Twin Cities area during the Derek Chauvin trial, particularly in the areas of the Hennepin County Government Center and/or the site of George Floyd’s death in Minneapolis. Indeed, a protest on the first day of jury selection has been organized by a multitude of social justice groups, including Black Lives Matter (BLM), outside the Government Center beginning at 9:00 AM CST. As of this writing, at least 860 people have indicated they plan to participate, though the possibility of several thousand people attending the gathering cannot be ruled out. Additional protests are expected throughout the coming weeks; however, few, if any, additional details have been shared in this regard. Further protest actions and potential escalation are likely to hinge on what occurs during the actual trial. Officials have noted they expect the highest potential for protest activity and/or unrest to be in mid to late April when final testimony, jury deliberation, and a final verdict is reached.

Although Minneapolis stands to represent the epicenter of protest activity, other US cities are expected to witness solidarity demonstrations in association with the Chauvin trial. The risk is highest in urban centers that have witnessed past bouts of unrest over police use of force or in support of BLM during the past year. Chief among these are Seattle, potentially in the vicinity of the former Capitol Hill Autonomous Zone; Portland’s Multnomah County Justice Center and other downtown government facilities; and LAPD and Sheriff’s stations in Los Angeles.

Other potential protest hotspots include Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Denver, Detroit, Kenosha, Louisville, Madison, Milwaukee, New York City, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Sacramento, Salt Lake City, San Diego, San Francisco, San Jose, and Washington DC. Presently, few details have been announced regarding any specific planned protests; however, activists in the following cities have indicated plans to assemble in the lead-up to and on March 8:

- Saturday, March 6
  - Boston, MA: 1300 at Terrence Coleman Park (Peter's Park), located at 1277 Washington Street.
  - Dorchester, MA: 1100-1230 at 256 Boston Street.
- Monday, March 8
  - Boston, MA: 1600 at Government Center, located near Cambridge Street and Court Street.
  - New Orleans, LA: 1600 at Duncan Plaza, near Loyola Avenue and Gravier Street
  - Tampa, FL: 1700 at Sam M. Gibbons Federal Courthouse, located at 801 N. Florida Avenue
  - Chicago, IL: 1800 at Federal Plaza, located near W. Adams Street and S. Clark Street

### RIMC Use of Force Risk Event Heat Map – Twin Cities – May 2020 - Jan 2021

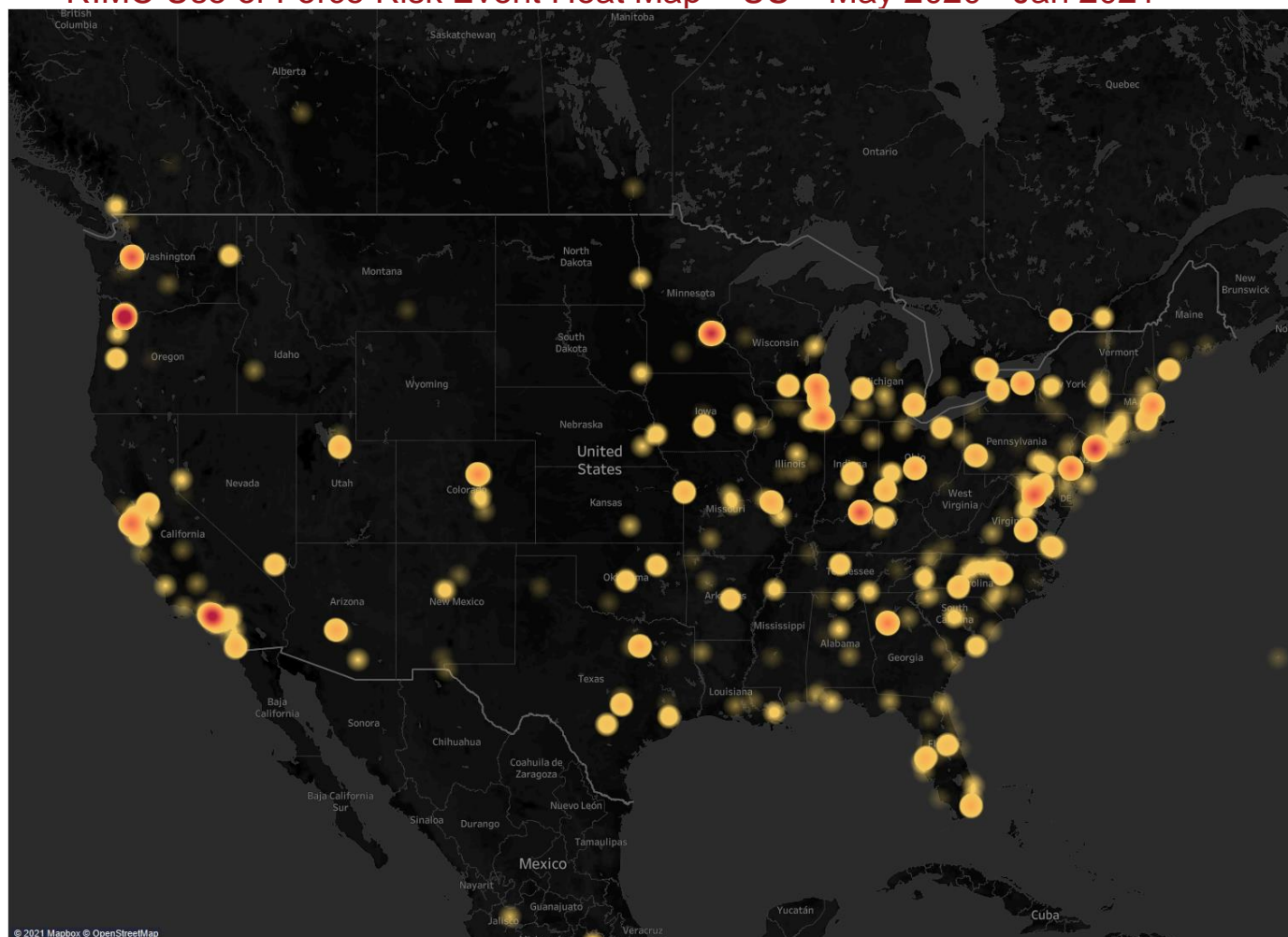




Smaller cities and towns are also likely to see protests related to the Chauvin trial. Indeed, urban areas with sizable minority populations will remain the locus of most demonstrations; however, last year's demonstrations over police use of force and perceived racial injustice also spread to traditionally conservative and predominantly Caucasian suburbs and communities. These included numerous cities and towns in Georgia, Iowa, Massachusetts, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia. Considering that such activity is rare in these areas, the protests suggested a groundswell of outrage over so-called systemic violence against African Americans, as well as support for BLM, especially among young people and likely driven in large part by social media. When coupled with the current climate of distrust in state institutions and heightened tensions overall, there is a considerable possibility that significant developments in the trial will prompt renewed demonstrations in smaller and mid-sized cities.

Similar gatherings are possible outside the United States as well. Between the death of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, and September 2020, nearly 9,000 demonstrations were held in 74 countries in solidarity with BLM. The vast majority of these gatherings occurred in Western Europe, though rallies were also reported in countries in Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Asia, including Brazil, Japan, South Africa, and South Korea. US diplomatic missions were the primary venue of the demonstrations, though activists also mobilized around locations associated with local incidents of alleged police abuse and racial injustice.

### RIMC Use of Force Risk Event Heat Map – US – May 2020 - Jan 2021



## ASSESSMENT

State and local officials have been preparing for the Chauvin trial for the last few weeks. While protest activity is expected, there is presently no known security threat against the proceedings. The enhanced security measures are largely in response to the widespread unrest that was seen throughout the summer of last year. Local and state leaders were heavily criticized in the aftermath of the summer riots for not acting faster to quell the unrest. Activists and community leaders have denounced the current security plan, claiming that higher-than-normal law enforcement presence and other security barriers have further aggravated tensions and could lead to quicker use of force by police during what are planned to be peaceful protest gatherings.

Indeed, law enforcement is likely to act quickly, potentially through crowd control and other measures, if they deem a demonstration as prone to escalation. During the May unrest, the Metro Transit system was shut down and a curfew was implemented across both Minneapolis and St Paul. Both actions could be re-employed if local leaders feel the situation is becoming violent or there are reports of rioting and looting. Due to the charged and emotive nature of the trial, there is a considerable risk of ordinarily minor actions provoking protesters into undertaking violent or otherwise disruptive behavior or prompting law enforcement to forcefully disperse demonstrators.

While there is likely to be a spurt of protest activity at the onset of the trial, barring any unforeseen developments, protest activity is likely to subside during preliminary proceedings, such as jury selection and opening testimony. Officials anticipate that the most significant protest activity will likely occur in mid-to-late April when the trial is wrapping up and a verdict is expected to be announced. Although the threat of unrest will persist from the onset of the trial, local authorities have indicated that security deployments will be ramped up in Minneapolis at the start of closing arguments. The highest risk, both in Minneapolis and elsewhere, will occur if a not guilty verdict is announced, or in response to a ruling that is seen as lenient. Such a decision could lead to large-scale nationwide protests and unrest akin to what occurred last summer.

Counter-protests are also possible around demonstrations related to the Chauvin trial. Members and supporters of far-right organizations and ideologies, such as the Proud Boys, the Three Percenters, the Oath Keepers, the Boogaloo Bois, and various local armed groups, staged a number of these gatherings amid the police use of force demonstrations last summer, and their increasing activity and assertiveness, evidenced by the January 6 storming of the US Capitol, portend similar involvement in response to future protests associated with BLM. With supporters of far-left causes, including anti-fascist (antifa) and anarchist groups, routinely joining police use of force protests as well, this will entail a greater risk of violence. Counter-protests, by nature, are more prone to clashes between rival activists and it has been reported that roughly 12 percent of all counter-protests during last summer's unrest after the death of George Floyd turned violent. In addition to physical confrontations between counter-protesters, extremists could infiltrate demonstrations in an effort to incite further violence against both activists and law enforcement. This occurred on multiple occasions last summer in both Minneapolis and elsewhere and led to several deaths and injuries as well as property damage. Further, vehicle-ramming attacks could also target demonstrations related to the Chauvin trial. According to the University of Chicago's Project on Security and Threats, between Memorial Day and Labor Day 2020, there were at least 105 instances where a vehicle was driven through a protest. At least 43 of those incidents were considered malicious and at least one was perpetrated by an individual with confirmed links to a white supremacist group.

City officials have recommended businesses in downtown Minneapolis to remain open during the trial. Nevertheless, commercial establishments and residents in the downtown area, especially near the Government Center, should anticipate an increased security presence over the next two months and prepare for the possibility of a variety of disruptions. These could include, but are not limited to, short-notice transportation infrastructure disruptions related to protests and/or law enforcement operations that could cause temporary delays to last-mile deliveries within the city. Due to the possibility of a wide variety of security-related disruptions, businesses are advised to create contingency plans that include guidance and procedures for minimizing personnel on-site, altering hours of operations, and fortifying buildings and other assets. As was seen last summer, businesses located in areas near courthouses or police stations may be more susceptible to potential rioting and looting activities. Heightened security measures adopted at government facilities could also cause unrest to spill over into adjacent commercial and residential properties. Any demonstrations that materialize should be avoided due to the potential for escalation and/or incidental violence. The public is reminded to exercise increased vigilance when in public locations and alert authorities to any suspicious or atypical items or behavior.